

Report on Current Status of Savage River Dam

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Last winter, operators with the Upper Potomac River Commission, which owns and manages Savage River Dam, discovered a significant malfunction with one of the gates that is used to control flows from the outlet structure of the dam. The gate was stuck in the closed position, eliminating the UPRC's ability to control outflow through half of the facility's outlet structures. Several months of detailed investigation by UPRC and their consulting engineers, in cooperation with the Maryland Department of the Environment's Dam Safety Program, resulted in recommendations to replace all four of the control gates located in the outlet structures of the dam. The gates were installed during the original construction of the facility and have been in service since 1952. While there is no immediate risk of failure of the gates, they are showing their age and so it makes sense to replace all four of the gates at this time.

The estimated cost to replace all four gates is nearly \$6 million. Allegany County and three major water suppliers in the Washington, D.C. area (Fairfax Water, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, and the Washington Aqueduct Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) typically fund operations and maintenance for Savage River dam. Because of the large, capital-type expense associated with this repair, Allegany County and the D.C. area water suppliers may not be able to provide all of the necessary funds, and they are looking for other partners to help offset some of the costs.

The original action plan for making repairs included two phases. Phase I was to occur between November 2008 and January 2009 at a construction cost of 0.8 million dollars. Phase I construction would have required draining the reservoir and onsite construction activity. Phase II was to occur between November 2009 and January 2010 and also included draining the reservoir and more onsite construction. Phase II construction cost are estimated to be 5.2 million dollars. Because of the delays in raising necessary funds, Phase I is unlikely to take place as scheduled and will be delayed until sometime in the November 2009 timeframe. Future plans for repairs will be modified if necessary given the timing of available funds.

There is no plan to remove the dam and there is no immediate risk of dam failure. The malfunctioning gate does limit outflow capacity. Officials from the Maryland Dam Safety Program are reviewing the current status and will issue a decision on how the reservoir is to be managed and operated until repairs are made. Their decision may place restrictions on refilling the reservoir and/or on outflow strategies. These factors may impact the UPRC's and the Army Corps of Engineers' ability to regulate flows in the Savage River as well as the North Branch of the Potomac River. These decisions may impact flood control, low flow augmentation, and water quality, as well as the cold water fishery and recreational uses of the rivers.

Prepared by: Upper Potomac River Commission, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Maryland Department of Environment Office of Dam Safety.